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THE NATIONAL PROBLEM.

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**AN ORATION,**

DELIVERED AT

**DELPHI, N. Y., JULY 4th, 1861,**

BY

**CHARLES E. FITCH.**

—————

**SYRACUSE:**  
SUMMERS & BROTHER, BOOK & JOB PRINTERS,  
DAILY STANDARD OFFICE.  
1861.



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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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DELPHI, JULY 5TH, 1861.

CHAS. E. FITCH, ESQ.,

DEAR SIR:—Upon the conclusion of your Oration before us on the 4th inst., a motion was made and carried unanimously, that with your consent, the Oration be published. We therefore, a Committee appointed for that purpose, earnestly request that you will accede to the desire of the citizens of Delphi, as above indicated.

Yours Respectfully,

RIEL S. TRACY, }  
F. W. DRURY, } Committee.

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SYRACUSE, 6TH JULY, 1861.

GENTS:—

With many thanks for your kind invitation and many pleasant reminiscences of my visit with you, the Oration, the publication of which you desire, is hereby placed at your disposal.

Yours, Very Truly,

CHAS. E. FITCH.

To Messrs. Riel S. Tracy, and F. W. Drury, Committee.





## ORATION.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

By solemn act of her Legislature, South Carolina is reported to have abolished the Fourth of July as a national holiday, thereby indicating that she had, (or at least desired) no part or lot in the glorious memories which crown with holiness this anniversary—thereby putting her impotent seal of condemnation upon the ideas embodied in the Declaration of Independence, vindicated on the battle fields of the Revolution by the swords of Washington and Greene and Sumter, and Marion, and emblazoned all over the sacred shield of our liberties, the Federal Constitution.

It is meet therefore that she and her so-styled confederate sisters, in the height of their insanity, should be found on this the natal day of the Republic, in hostile array against those great principles of constitutional liberty which have made the name of America honored throughout the civilized world ; Meet is it, that in their desperation the Southern hosts should spread their tents at Yorktown, upon the very ground where Washington received the sword of Cornwallis, and from whence the great republic sprang into vigorous life ; Meet that drifting as they are, towards a feudal aristocracy, the glittering pageant of royalty should dazzle the eyes of Southern gentlemen, and that with one acclaim they should cry for an English prince and the petty titles of nobility.

Appropriate as it is, that the bogus confederacy should thus annul the 4th of July—more appropriate still is it, that we, the freemen and women of America, who still cherish in our heart of hearts, our noble birthright and

the blessings which flow from it—who cling to the Republic and the hopes born of it—who read aright the lessons which history teaches, and view with prophetic eye the destiny which God has prepared for this land, should celebrate this day with more than our accustomed fervor and enthusiasm; that on this anniversary of the day, upon which eighty five years ago the bell of Independence Hall rang forth in jubilant tone proclaiming “liberty to the land and all the inhabitants thereof,” we should calmly review all the blessings which liberty brings with it—and the full cost of their perpetuation.

Glad am I therefore, to see the indications of the spirit of the people as this day exhibited throughout the land.—From hamlet to hamlet rings the welkin cry of faith—rings the clarion voice of an indignant and outraged, but a firm and united people. Never before in our history have so many proud American banners greeted the morn as to-day—never have the masses so rallied around them—never have so many orators strengthened the stalwart heart of the country with words of courage and promise—never has the glad Amen so rolled forth its thunder tone from the lips of freemen listening to the inspired utterances of Thomas Jefferson.

The circumstances under which we meet to-day are new and startling. Heretofore we have indulged in eulogies upon the American constitution, but have never until now really comprehended the full meaning of that blessed instrument—to-day we mean something more than eulogy—that constitution is menaced with the despoiler’s grasp, and eulogy gives place to a *faith* deep and abiding in the palladium of our hopes, and born of such faith comes a stern resolve to maintain and uphold it in its entire scope and integrity.

It is given us to solve the greatest political problem which God propounds to the nations, viz: Whether Re-

publican institutions are a failure? The problem antecedent to this, whether Republican institutions can be successfully established, has already been evolved for us by our fathers. But ours is a grander and a wider problem far—for the nations have always been making spasmodic efforts towards the formation of Republican institutions, but in most instances the blasts of adversity have ere long uprooted their foundations, and they have fallen into a mass of ruins.

My friends are we capable of working out this problem successfully? Do we bring to its solution a profound faith in the divine origin of Republics—a comprehensive intuition and practical experience of the blessings which flow from them, and a courageous devotion to them which shall be exemplified in our every act, until the iron tread of grim-visaged war shall no more shake the land, and out of the smoke and din of embattled hosts, fair and radiant as the morning Peace shall come bearing her golden sheaves and fruits and flowers?

I hold with confidence the belief that we shall be found equal to the emergency, else had not been this majestic uprising of the people to vindicate the national honor—this enthusiasm for liberty, which has stilled the noisy jargon of traffic, making the broker's counter the fountain of beneficence, and converted the Flora McFlimseys of Broadway and the Avenue into Florence Nightingales, ready angels of mercy for new Scutaris and Balaklavas. All this means that we fully appreciate the grave responsibilities which have befallen us, and like true men and women, mean to meet them.

We must not think that in entering upon the solution of this problem, we are called to a holiday festival. We are to pass through many and fierce trials. The fair and young and brave shall taste the bitterness of death under the rays of the Southern sun, and garments of mourning shall

abound in our streets. We are to walk through the fiery furnace of affliction. To-day the nation groans with the pains of its second birth. Southern Hotspurs driven like the money changers of old, from the temple which they have desecrated, have fired upon the flag which for 80 years has protected them—the banks of the Potomac, where sleeps the Father of his country, are bristling with hostile cannon, and the “soft-flowing James” may ere long trace its course through desolated villages and by fields of carnage, and stagnate with the blood of Anglo Saxon men. The nations of the old world look in tremulous anxiety for the result. Patriot hearts grow sad; and tyrants representing dead fogyisms, cry in exultant tones—this is the end of Republican Institutions—this their boasted perpetuity—this the great nation whose flag waved such a saucy defiance towards old conventionalisms—this the marvel of governments which heralded the redemption of the world—come let us go up to our jubilee.

Oh! my friends, in this our night of gloom, upon the outer horizon of which I surely see the day star of hope faintly shining, it surely behooves us to inquire if Republican institutions are really a failure. Sad thought if they are; if the nations have been slowly groping upwards through the long ages, only to be hurled back into anarchic chaos, or confined within the iron chambers of despotism, whose walls gradually closing around them, shall finally stifle them to death.

In such results we do not believe. Our faith in the saving influence of free government is altogether too deep and earnest. We believe that no times are so dark but what bright beams of God's glory are shining through that darkness, and His hand is pushing humanity forward all the time. We believe in the divine origin of republics.—I know that Kingship arrogates to itself a peculiar dispensation from the Most High. “By the grace of God” we rule.

It must certainly be by His *grace* alone. But Kingship has been most terribly startled out of its dullness sometimes ; made to see the hand-writing on the wall, and taught that there was a people behind it, from whom all government sprang. When Martin Luther nailed his famous protest upon the church door of Wittenberg, he struck the key note of ideas which forced their recognition not only upon Cardinal and Pope, but upon King and Emperor as well. The leaven infused into the church was not slow in seeking development in the state. The protest of the people against King-craft in state was not less earnest than that against Priest-craft in church. It penetrated to the cabinet of Philip II at Madrid, and the Dutch Republic under the guidance of William of Orange vindicated it upon the battle fields of the Netherlands. Charles I felt its force when his scented Cavaliers went down before Cromwell's Covenanters at Naseby, and he knew its full meaning when his kingly head bowed to the axe's stroke. Poor Louis XVI, expiating the crimes of his ancestors in the terrible days of the French Revolution, felt its deep significance, and George III came at last to recognize it when his fairest provinces had made good their independence of him.

There can be no truer proposition than that a Republic is the best form of government for intelligent men ; such proposition being derived from the indications of God's purposes in the history of the world, and from our convictions of its appropriateness. If it is not so, progress is the mythic creature of distorted brains, a cobweb of fancy.—Allowing as a Republic does, the fullest exercise of individual rights consistent with the general welfare, it gives the freest expansion to the best instincts of humanity ; but the people must be educated up to the stand-point of appreciation before they are fitted to enjoy the blessings which flow from Republican institutions. This education which the world receives, is what we term *progress*, which indeed is no myth, but a vital fact whose indices are traced

all down the stream of time, exhibiting itself in science, in art, in letters, in religion. All these seek their legitimate expression in government. It bears upon its catalogue a long list of sages and philosophers, of heroes and martyrs, of men the pioneers of their times, striking out from the deep ruts of error and prejudice and cant, and leading the race into new pathways of truth.

It has been reserved for us of the 19th Century to witness the most glorious developments which Progress, moulded by divine influence, has ever made. We have seen the old Hellenic fire relume the eyes of Grecian men not quite dead to the memories of Marathon and Thermopylae—the noble stand which Paris made behind the barricades of '48—the students of Vienna chanting freedom strains in stately German verse, under the walls of the Emperors palace and the Magyars, with souls of fire, and sinews of iron, striking for liberty amid the mountains of Hungary.

We see to-day freedom everywhere claiming her own. In obedience to her dictates, the Czar of Russia strikes the fetters from millions of serfs—Austria loses the fairest of her Italian provinces—that old mummy the Pope wrapped in the cerements of worn out superstitions, begins to fear for his temporal supremacy, as the bayonets of Napoleon cease to uphold it—and Italy under the sublime inspiration of Victor Emanuel's and Garibaldi's patriotism, takes her rightful position among the nations of the earth. The right of a majority of the people to secure and maintain a controlling influence in governmental affairs, is fast becoming a recognized political axiom—let Francis Joseph or Jefferson Davis deny it as they may.

With such lights to guide us, we are opposed to the aristocratic element arrogating to itself the right to rule, in despite of democratic edict to the contrary, and we hold it a new and strange doctrine (though it is as old as despot-

ism itself,) that when the minority are fairly beaten at the ballot box, they have the slightest pretence for annulling the will of the majority, by an appeal to the cartridge box.

Therefore the first gun fired by rebel hands towards Sumter's beleaguered citadel, roused in an instant the slumbering patriotism of the people. Men's eyes began to kindle with a new lustre. Up to the top of highest flag staff in hamlet and city went the stars and stripes, and round its base we swore to defend the emblem of freedom with our heart's best blood. Party lines were blended into one common impulse of duty. Out from old garrets came the muskets of '76, consecrated to a new crusade for liberty. The miser's hoarded eagles were placed a glad offering upon his country's altar. The plow was left in the furrow, the busy spindle ceased its noisy whirl, and the brawny arm of the smith sought a hotter forge. The cheek of the maiden paled not, her step lost not its airy tread, and faltered not her voice as she said her last good bye to her lover bound for the war. The sound of the drum was heard in our streets and eager recruits kept time to its music. The men of God come down from their pulpits to invoke His blessing upon the stalwart troops marching at their country's call. The men of Massachusetts walked with firm pace through the insurgent streets of Baltimore, and the 19th of April 1861, reached back to fellowship with the 19th of April, 1775. The cobblers of Connecticut and the miners of Pennsylvania, went with willing hearts to teach Senator Hammond the true value of mud-sills in the frame work of society.

Thank God, my friends, that we live in the midst of these stirring times. *We are working out the problem.* We have not yet lost the inspiration of the Covenanters and Round Heads; the Puritan stock still lives buoyant as it did two centuries ago; the Cavaliers are to see it and recognize it. Know we not that though we have

read history all our lives, we are making it to-day, faster than it was ever made before? We thought we knew what "contraband of war" meant, but Gen. Butler has given it a fresher and wider definition than the dictionaries ever contained. Never came patriot armies to defence of threatened capital so rapidly as went the Northern hosts to Washington, during the terrible week of suspense that succeeded the fall of Sumter.

Already rest the green sods of the valley, on martyred heroes bosoms. Ellsworth tearing down the hateful emblem of secession, in the still gray of the early May morning, stands a fitting representative of all that is earnest and chivalric in American character. The story of his life reads like some strange legend of Knight errantry.— Full of all womanly graces, yet born to lead bronzed and bearded men to the shock of battle. A Paladin of Romance—the idol of the nation, yet confronting with the very incarnation of energy, the stern facts of the present. How the mournful requiem of 1861 fills out the measure of the "Io Triumphic" of 1860. By the waters of the Hudson weep his aged parents—by far off Mississippi the heart of a gentle girl is wrung with keenest anguish, and with them a nation joins its tears. Yet, in all their sorrow, come to them winged with consolation the last words of the slain, and they know that "He who watches the sparrow" had some great purpose in the dark mystery of Ellsworth's death. As says another, "The poor wretch who stumbled upon an immortality of infamy, by murdering him, died at the same instant. The two stand in the light of that event clearly revealed types of the two systems in conflict to-day. The one brave, refined, courtly, generous, tender and true; the other, not lacking in brute courage, reckless, besotted, ignorant and cruel."

The nation too mourns a Winthrop dead, just as he was to make the name honored anew in American history, and



we swear to avenge the fate of Greble, so cool and dauntless in the hour of peril, and of Ward dying at the post of duty.

We stand face to face with great events—we have met the irrepressible conflict which the past has been bringing to this dread issue. But if we are true to ourselves, we shall triumph in the end. This country of our's with its broad lakes, its swift flowing rivers, its majestic mountains, and its vast acres of rolling prairies was *meant* for the home of freemen. Our virgin territory was never designed as the place whereon despotism was to develope, but as the dwelling place for the hardy sons of toil, who should rear for themselves free homes on free soil, and forever maintain and defend them by force arms.

I have just read in the latest European dispatches, the startling intelligence that France proposes to recognize the Southern Confederacy, and we know how the great cry coming up from the Manchester Mills, that "Cotton is King," has drowned the voice of Exeter Hall in England. We had no reason to expect much sympathy from the mysterious man of the Tuilleries, but we had hoped something from the honest, earnest heart of the English nation; we believe still that the masses of the people of both nations are with us, but be that as it may, this rebellion *must be put down* though the whole world say us, nay; eight millions of freemen shall form a breast-work against which all the despotisms under the sun, shall dash in impotent rage. The very women shall bear the gun and wield the sword, and sucking infants shall be stronger than an army with banners. Leonidas did not teach the world in vain what three hundred Spartan braves could do against the Persian hosts.

I cannot leave this this branch of my subject without a brief allusion to some of the causes which have brought about the present state of affairs. I know that we do not

care to speculate very much upon causes--we are in the midst of results. We are not so much in the mood of philosophising, as we are in that of fighting; but still a single moment may not be thus unprofitably spent.

I believe, do you believe with me, that God punishes nations for their sins just as he does individuals? A great people may fall into the wiles of seductive influences, just as easily as the man Samson reeled into the fatal embrace of Delilah. I am young yet, but young as I am, I have not been unmindful that America had great sins eating into the heart of her national greatness--sins which, unless the caustic of repentance was soon applied, would destroy the body politic. It is not hard to account for some of our sins. Unexampled prosperity, such as we have enjoyed, usually brings with it arrogance and self-conceit. We have developed the material at the expense of the moral.

Making haste to be rich has been the universal mania of the people. We had speculated in fancy stocks on Wall street, and built most magnificent cities upon paper. We had become hardened to the claims of charity, the sweet endearments of home and the worship of our God. We worshiped the Golden Calf. When the warning voice of patriotism came down from Pisgah heights of thought into the busy haunts of commerce, bidding us take heed of the swift Maelstrom of destruction, towards which we were hurrying, we have dubbed it an idiotic ebullition of fanaticism and bid it see how its crazy teachings affected stocks. My good sir, we have said, to some true patriot all alive to his country's weal or woe, what you say may be theoretically considered, very true and honest and noble, but for God's sake, look at stocks. Hence we have subsidized everything to our craving for wealth. What cared the brokers of Wall street, or the money changers of State street, if Sims was delivered up to Southern bloodhounds, and Anthony Burns walked with clanking fetters, under the

very shadow of Faneuil Hall, provided New York Central was firm at 90, and the Bank dividends made their semi-annual visits? Hence we have ever been ready to compromise, to barter principle for pelf, to uphold by Northern votes in Congress, and Northern marshall's staves outside of it, that cursed institution which has been the very cancer of death upon our political system.

Claiming to be the freest government on earth, we have held 4,000,000 of men in bondage. We have set at naught the Declaration of Independence, and have presented the sad spectacle to the world of theoretic civilization and practical barbarism. Is it any wonder that when we at last arise from our drunken slumber, we should awake to the horrors of civil war? Do we not feel as if it was a visitation of God; that our sins at last had found us out? We shall come bravely through the trial—never fear—we have burst the fetters that bound us and stand erect in our manhood. The horrid drama of secession is nearly played-out—its actors will retire amidst the hisses of christendom.

Can we doubt what the end of that institution which has been the fell upas tree of our liberties, will be?

Thank God that the era of compromises *is* ended. Compromises, as if forsooth there could be a compromise between God and the Devil. Out of our sore afflictions we shall come ready to build up a purer nationality—we shall vindicate our true national glory—for our real glory does not consist in the snowy sails of our commerce, swelling to the gales of every sea—in an expanded and ever expanding territory, in forts and arsenals, in proud navies or triumphant armies, in bales of Georgia cotton or tons of Pennsylvania ore, in merchant princes palaces, or the busy hum of Lowell spindles, but rather in a firm, persistent, enthusiastic devotion to the great principles on which our government is based—to Liberty, the corner stone on which the whole

fabric rests. This achieved, and all other things shall be added thereunto.

War with all the horrors attendant upon it, is not after all, the greatest evil which can befall a nation. Ignominious peace, the loss of national honor is a direr evil still. Christianity folds to its embrace no craven hearts. Patrick Henry but put into eloquent phrase the far more eloquent sentiment of patriotic hearts, when he said "Give me liberty or give me death." In such utterances there can be no ambiguous meaning ; there speaks no Delphic oracle.

The war to which we are pledged must go on, (and it is well that our rulers should understand it,) until the stars and stripes shall wave over every state in the Union, every fort and arsenal stolen from us shall be restored, every cent of the abstracted national funds shall be paid back with interest, and the leaders of this unholy rebellion suffer the just penalty of violated law at the end of the hangman's cord, or be driven into ignominious exile. Rebellion never lifted its defiant head in so fiendish a cause as does the Southern conspiracy to-day, against the mild government of the Federal Union. No attack had been made upon a single right guaranteed the South by the Constitution, nor was any contemplated. Her peculiar institution itself was only kept in being by the strong arm of federal authority—and yet because forsooth the control of national affairs had passed, by the voice of the people, out of her hands, and Cobb was driven from the money bags, and Floyd's chances for robbery were taken from him, she must needs revolt. We have accepted the issue forced upon us—have appealed to the dread arbitrament of arms, and if in the struggle the last vestige of slavery is swept from the American continent, we are not the ones to shed very many or bitter tears about it. It is not our fault if Canada has been brought down to Virginia.

We make no war upon the Southern people as such. We know that in many Southern homes, love deep and ardent still exists for the Union, and prayers daily ascend that the day of their deliverance may not be far distant, but against the men who have stirred up hot fanaticisms, and filled the ear of the South with misrepresentation and abuse of everything North of Mason and Dixons line we do not make war—and our tents shall not be folded, nor our swords seek their scabbards, until they at least have been made to acknowledge the supremacy of the Union.

To-day the Congress of the United States, in obedience to the call of the chief magistrate, meets to devise and adopt the best measures for the vigorous prosecution of the people's war. They go from the free homes of the North, and meet at the national capital, surrounded by the soldiers of the people. Can it be possible that they can fail to catch the inspiration which wells up from the hearts of patriot citizens and patriot soldiery? Can they forget the sacredness of the day on which they sit in solemn conclave? Shall not Washington remember Philadelphia? Oh! yes, unless I greatly mistake the temper of our representatives, they will not falter in their duty. But already I see indications that craven traitors will lay before that august assembly, certain plans of compromise. Compromise with armed rebels—was ever such a farce enacted in the annals of government? Will some one be kind enough to indicate what there is to compromise? Is Keitt again to swagger through Washington, and Toombs threaten to call the roll of his slaves on Bunker Hill? We want no compromise, save the valid compromise of victory over rebel hosts. It is the only compromise which they will respect. Shame upon such propositions. They can only emanate from hearts in sympathy with treason. The effrontery of Davis and the cunning of Stephens exhibits itself behind such transparent dodges. Compromise?

"No! By all the Mayflower's peril  
 On the wild and wintry sea ;  
 By the Pilgrim's Prayer ascending  
 As he knelt with reverent knee ;  
 By that fairest day of summer  
 When the tried, the true, the brave,  
 Name and life and sacred honor  
 To the Roll of Freedom gave ;

"By the tears, the march, the battle  
 Where the noble, fearless died—  
 Wild around the cannon's rattle,  
 Waiting angels at their side—  
 By our children's golden future,  
 By our fathers' stainless shield,  
 That which God and heroes left us  
 We will never, never yield !

"Hear it! ye who sit in council,  
 We, the People, tell you so !  
 Will you venture "Yes" to whisper  
 When the millions thunder "No?"  
 Will you sell the nation's birthright,  
 Heritage of toil and pain,  
 While a cry of shame and vengeance  
 Rings from Oregon to Maine !

We have only one plain pathway left wherein to tread. It is the pathway of duty. We must prosecute with vigor, this war for popular rights, until the insulted dignity of the nation is appeased, and freedom's flag floats over every inch of the national domain. Then and not till then, shall we in truth know that the Union is not a mere rope of sand, but a cordon strong and inflexible, binding together one people—that secession is a horrid burlesque and a miserable falsehood.

## MEN OF ONONDAGA :—

I have endeavored to speak to you soberly and earnestly to-day. I have indulged in no eulogy upon the glories and blessings of the American Union, and have not read to you the old story of Saratoga and Trenton and Valley Forge—the one finds its grandest eulogy in your fields of yellow grain and homes of thrift—the other lives ever fresh and beautiful in your memories.

I have preferred to deal with the present, fraught as it is with such lessons of solemn import. That from such brief discussion as we have had together, we may all go forth stronger hearted and better fitted to grapple with our stern responsibilities, is my fervent prayer. I have sometimes feared for the future of my country, but the spectacle of to-day bids hope rise triumphant over fear. The glad day of deliverance surely cometh, when the clouds shall roll away from ensanguined fields, and the golden light of peace shall stream up the Southern sky, and with one strong voice this great people from the Penobscot to the Rio Grande shall echo as they never echoed before, the immortal words of Webster, “Liberty and Union—now and forever—one and inseparable.”



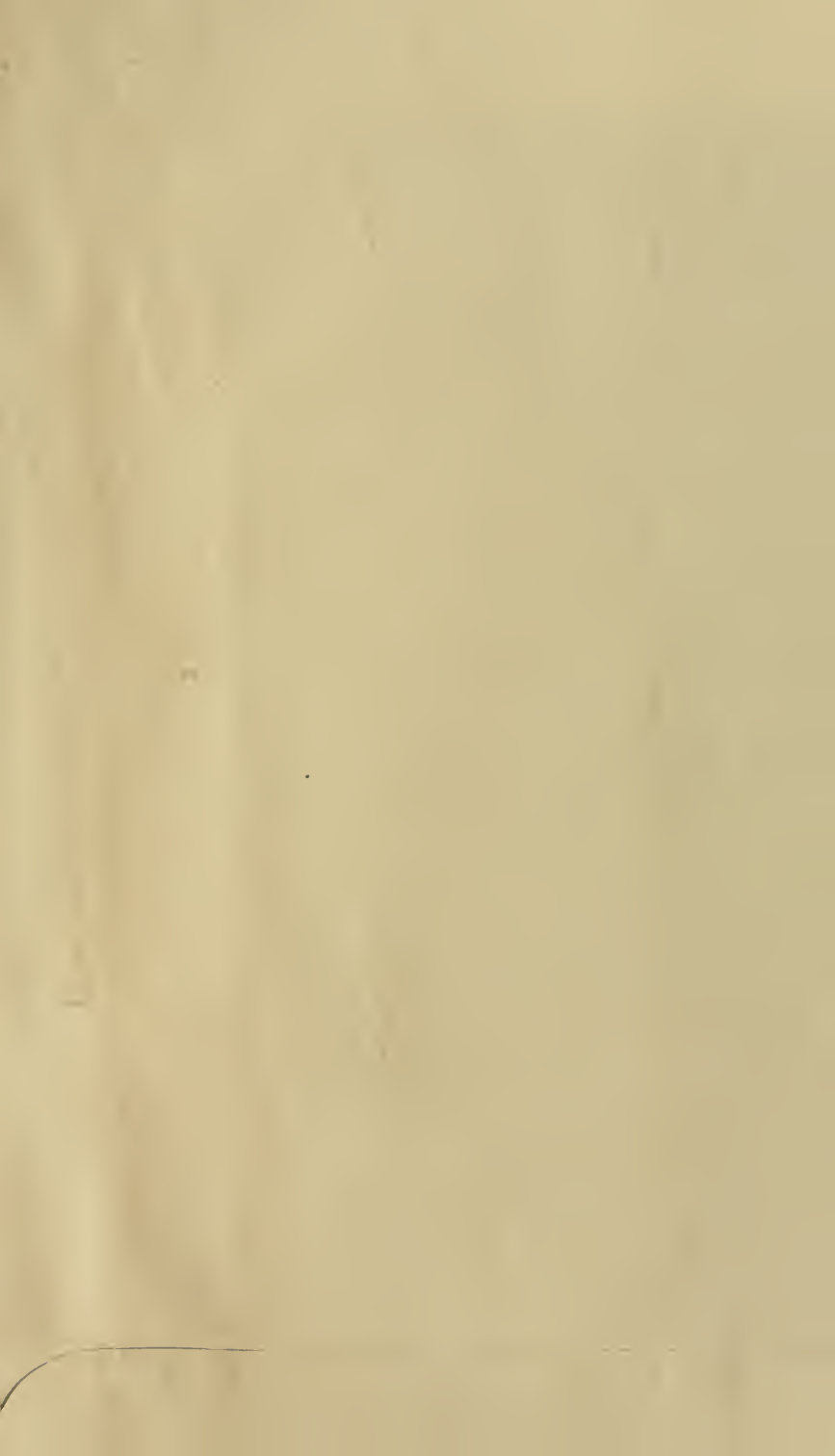




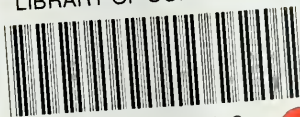
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